

[Czechoslovakian Lore]

Dup.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER MAY SWENSON

ADDRESS 21 Morton St. NYC

DATE October 31st. 1938

SUBJECT CZECHOSLOVAKIAN LORE - Priest and Peasant Stories

1. Date and time of interview

Oct. 27, 1938

2. Place of interview

Miss Vrbovska's home

3. Name and address of informant

Miss Anca Vrbovska 509 E. 79th. Street, NYC

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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Have submitted previous interviews with this informant

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

(See interviews of August 31, 1938)

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FORM B Personal History of informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER MAY SWENSON

ADDRESS 21 Morton Street, NYC

DATE October 31st, 1938

SUBJECT CZECHOSLOVAKIAN LORE - Priest and Peasant Stories

1. Ancestry Born in Czechoslovakia, lived there until the age of 14 years.

2. Place and date of birth

Informant stated that she did not care to give age, date of birth, or other personal information.

3. Family

4. Place lived in, with dates

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5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant

Small stature. Neat, compact figure. Dark hair. Dark penetrating eyes. Dynamic.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER May Swenson

ADDRESS 509 E. 79th St. New York, N. Y. Apt. 21

DATE Oct. 31, 1938

SUBJECT CZECHOSLOVAKIAN LORE - PRIEST AND PEASANT STORIES.

There lived a sort of peasant and his wife in a Slovak village. And thees peasant somehow felt that his wife wasn't faithful to him. But he could nevair verify thees belief in her unfaithfulness. So one evening, on a cold winter evening, he says to his wife:

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"Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you, I got to go to the neighboring village to speak to a friend of mine, and I probably won't return until tomorrow morning."

So the wife kissed him goodbye, wished him a pleasant journey, hoping for his safe return.

No sooner was he gone, when ay priest knocked on the door. So she hurriedly opened the door and welcomed the priest. He said:

"Well, everything all right?"

Says: "Yes. He went out for the entire night." Then she went over to the stove, opened it and pulled out ay roast goose and other excellent foods, ay bottle of wine, and put it on the table, and they began to eat.

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The priest was getting ready for ay pleasant evening of love making. But behold no sooner they started eating when there was somebody knocking on the door.

"Hide yourself quickly," she said to the priest.

"Where shall I hide myself?"

"Crawl under the chimney in the kitchen."

(You see, there was a sort of kiln, where they bade bread under the chimney.)

In the meantime she couldn't hide the food and the husband kept knocking on the door.

"Let me in. I forgot some important papers!"

He entered, saw the food on the table. "Ah," he said, "I'm so glad that in ay way you expected my return."

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Sat down to the goose and the wine. After he finished his supper, he went off again.

"Now I'm sure I won't have to return until morning."

Just when the priest was on the point of crawling out of the oven, came ay knocking on the door again. Well, the woman knew that this was another priest of the village. So she said to the priest in the oven, "Stay there, stay there," and let in the newcomer.

So they embraced and kissed and she hurried to prepare some eats. And just when they were getting ready for, what shall I say, lovemaking, she heard a knocking on the window, and her husband's voice:

Said, "Let me in. I forgot my lanter, and its very dark out there."

3

So the second priest was frightened. "Where shall I hide myself? He will kill me!"

"Go under the chimney in the kitchen, and go into the oven."

So the husband came in, apologized to his wife, got the lantern and assured her he won't return before the morning anymore.

No sooner was he gone when someone knocks again on the door. She says, "Who is it?"

"Oh, let me in. You know me. I'm the priest from St. Michael's parish."

So she let him in and prepared for him ay delicious supper, and they set down and began to eat. And the priest from St. Michael's parish was just on the point of telling her his love, when there was again ay knocking on the window.

She didn't even wait for the voice. She said, "Hide yourself quickly. It must have been my husband. He must have forgotten again something."

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"Where shall I hide myself?" asked the third priest.

"Oh, go in the kitchen under the chimney and crawl into the oven."

So when the three of them were in the oven, the first priest asked, "Who are you?" The second priest said, "I'm the priest from St. Joseph's parish." The third one said, "I'm the priest from St. Michael's parish." So they found out that all of the three priests of that small community were in the oven. And all the three of them met in the oven.

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Meanwhile, the jealous, suspicious husband said to his wife: "Now at last I found you out. Now put all the food with which you used to feed our Reverend Fathers on the table." And she did so.

After he finished his meal, he said: "And now I'm going to kill you." And he did so. And then he pushed her in the oven too. And then brought in kindling wood and made a big fire in the oven, and all the four of them were burned, and nothing remained of them but their skeletons. So the poor peasant had four skeletons in his house and he didn't know how to get rid of them. And he was very worried.

And naturally in the village all the churches suspended services, because there were no priests and none of the villagers knew what became of their priests.

Now comes the real juicy part of the story....After a short time, the army maneuvers were held, and soldiers were sent to the village to find living quarters in the homes of the peasants. One of thees plucky sargents came to our poor worried peasant. And he said:

"Well, Peasant, I'm going to sleep here tonight."

The peasant shook his head very sadly. "Don't do that, my son. Don't do that. My house is haunted."

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"What! haunted?" said the soldier. "You don't mean to say you believe in ghosts?"

"Yes, my house is haunted by the ghost of a priest who appears in the form of a skeleton every midnight, when the clock strikes twelve."

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"Listen," said the soldier, "I don't believe in any ghost nor in the devil himself. I'm going to stay here." But, he said, holding on to his dagger, "if there is a ghost in this house, I'm going to get rid of him tonight, so you will never be bothered by him anymore."

"Alright," said the peasant, "but don't blame me for an unpleasant, sleepless night that is in store for you."

The soldier threw himself on the bed and sank into a deep slumber.

Around twelve o'clock, the peasant dragged out of the oven one of the skeletons and placed him beside the soldier's bed. Then she shook the snoring soldier.

"Mr. Soldier! There he stands!"

Soldier jumps up. "Alright," he says, "I'm going to get rid of him. Give me a sack."

Grabbed the skeletons put him in the sack, tied it with a rope and ran off to the river at the end of the village, and threw it in the water. And then rushed back to continue sleep.

Entered the place and said, gaily: "Well, now we both can sleep."

Peasant shook his head very sadly. "You don't know much about the nature of ghosts. Look! There he stands beside the bed. Got home before you!"

So he pulled out in the meantime the second priest. "See that? It was the second priest. Well, the soldier swore a little, grabbed the skeleton of the second priest, whom he believe

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to be the ghost and put him in ay sack and tied it with ay big rope and rushed 6 out to got rid of him, and threw him in the river at the end of the village.

In the meantime the peasant pulled out the third priest and placed it beside the soldier's bed. The panting soldier arrived home and said, "Ah well now I did get rid of him."

The peasant shook his head very sadly, and said, "That's what you think! See that? He got again home before you. There he stands beside the bed."

So the raging soldier picked up the skeleton and threw him in the sack and got hold of ay good-sized rock and threw it in the sack also, and they tied the sack with the rope, and "Well," he said "He can't come back anymore. Thees rock will carry him to the bottom of the river."

"Good luck," said the peasant, "I hope you succeed so that both of us can go to sleep."

So the soldier wearily dragged the skeleton to the river and threw him in, and stood there watching how the sack was descending to the bottom of the river. Then be walked homeward. This time he really got rid of all the three burnt priests, who he mistook for a ghost.

As he was treading his way homeward, ay coach with two lovely steeds, was passing him by. Since he was very tired and very eager to get home he stopped the coach and asked the driver: "Can I ride with you? And who are you driving there anyhow?"

Said the coachman: "Oh, it's the priest for St. Luke's." (This was the newly appointed priest to the village that was badly in need of a new priest, since the disappearance of the three former priests.)

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"Ahah," said the soldier. "Now I'm wise to his tricks. Now I see how he makes to get home before me. Here all night I've been dragging him to the river, and now I find him, for the fourth time, riding in ay coach back!"

So he dragged the priest and put him in ay sack and tied ay rope around the sack and threw him also in the river. Then he came home to the peasant, and the peasant was smiling, and the soldier was smiling.

"Well, this time you really got rid of him," said the peasant.

"You bet I did!" said the soldier. "But only because I managed to find him while he was riding in a coach back to you."

There was living in a Slovak village, a very poor but honest shoemaker, who aside from his wife, could boast of no earthly possessions whatsoever, save his only cow.

The shoemaker and his wife were very faithful members of the church congregation, because that was the only amusement they could afford. Every Sunday afternoon, Shoemaker would go to the church, listen to the priest sermon, and would be the last one to leave the church, and carefully memorize what the priest said that day.

On one Sunday afternoon, thees priest delivered the oration about how God reyards those who, what shall I say, who part with their 8 possessions and give it to others. The Bible said 'Those who give shall receive tenfold.'

Well, the poor shoemaker was struck by that saying. He was indeed very much in need of God's tenfold blessings. So right after he returned home, he said to his wife:

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"Wife, from today on all our troubles are over. I know now the right road to riches. Come," he said, "let us take our cow, Straka, to the priest and give her to him."

"You are crazy," said the wife. "You don't want me to part from our only cow! Where will me get milk?"

"Don't worry about that," said the shoemaker. "This afternoon, the priest, who in God's servant, and knows what he is talking about, said 'Give and thou shalt receive tenfold'. That is simple enough. I'll give him my cow and I shall receive ten cows and then we will have 'leven."

"Alright," said the wife. "You are the man in the house, and a man is always supposed to know more than any woman. So let us, by all means, give our cow, Straka, to the priest."

The priest was very touched by the gift of these poor people and he appreciated it because he knew that this cow was the only possession the shoemaker could boast of.

And then the shoemaker and his wife returned home. The following evening, sunset, when the herd was driven home from the pasture land, the shoemaker opened his gate of his house. The faithful Straka naturally rushed toward her former home. And lo and behold, the ten fat cows of the priest followed her!

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The shoemaker let them in and then closed the gate. Called his wife and said, "See! It has happened! Straka returned with ten fat cows. 'Tis true indeed those who give shall receive tenfold!"

But their rejoicing didn't last very long, because the priest and his servants came to the shoemaker and asked him to release the cows. The shoemaker protested, but his protestations were of no avail. The priest, with the aid of his servants, got his ten cows and Straka also.

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His wife burst into tears.

“How are we going to live now our only cow is gone? You haven't got enough money to buy leather for shoes, at least, so that we could sell the shoes. Well, we just starve to death.”

The dejected shoemaker said, “Well, there is nothing left for me but to pick up the few pair of boots that we had from former years and take them to the city and sell them at the Fair.”

So he put the boots on a rack over his shoulder and went off to the city. He stood there in the market from morning until night, almost, but no one cared to purchase a pair of boots. So somehow, he slumbered off for a while, and in the meantime somebody stole the boots.

Things seemed very dark, and he didn't dare to go home to his wife. Instead of that he sneaked into the priest's house, and there he entered the priest's housekeeper's (who, incidentally was a very comely peasant wench) bedroom. And he crawled under her bed.

Oh, around late in the evening, the housekeeper entered the room, unlaced bar shoes, took off her dress, lay down on the bed and stretched her limbs, and got ready for a good night's slumber.

10

Suddenly the door was opened in a very cautious manner, and who should enter but the priest. He went over to the bed and viewed the housekeeper with admiration. Then he bent over her face and looked for a long time into her eyes without saying a word. So at last the housekeeper said:

“What do you see there in my eyes, Reverend Father?”

“Oh,” said the priest, with a deep sigh, “I see in your eyes the entire world.”

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And then suddenly there was heard the loud voice of the shoemaker: "And do you see my boots there too?"

It's needless to say that the shoemaker did receive his reward, and the ten fat cows of the priest, and his own faithful cow, Straka.

COMMENT BY INFORMANT: -

This story was really told to me by one of the...oh, she was a swell woman...big, tall, husky peasant woman. Her name was Maria Buronova. And one of them was told to me by Katerina Sedlacek. Husking corn in autumn, the peasant women all sit around the corn pile...a corn pile just like a mountain...sit around it and tear out the leaves from the corn. Then they tell stories while husking. This was in Sandorf, in western Slovakia, my native village.

Our peasants had a wholesome humor, a sort of Rabelasian humor. The priests had always housekeepers, and children, although they were supposed to be celibate. And the peasants approved of them.

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After all, the priest needs a wife too. Very broadminded about it. They said, "Yes, our priest wears a cassock, but you never know what he hides under it!"

The first day of New Year, the priest read off all the names of the children who were born that year. And last he would read the names of all the illegitimate children, and say: "This village leads them all in the birth of bastards!"

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FORM D Extra [Comment?]

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER May Swenson

ADDRESS 509 E. 79th St. New York, N. Y. Apt. 21

DATE Oct. 31, 1938

SUBJECT CZECHOSLOVAKIAN LORE - PRIEST AND PEASANT STORIES

I was interested in noting the mixture of modern and old-world idioms, informant used in telling these two stories. She used slang phrases such as these:

....“hurried to prepare some eats”

....“Now come the real juicy part of the story!”

“Ahah,” said the soldier, “Now I'm wise to his tricks.

“That's what you think!” said the peasant

Side by side, are idioms frequently seen in standardized myths, fairy stories and folk tales:

“No sooner was he gone, than...”

“And he did so...”

...“As he was threading his way homeward..”

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...“Tis true indeed that...”

Informant pronounces the word 'this' as thees; the word 'a' as ay and says 'reyard' for 'reward.' Uses such internal phrases as: “What shall I say?” and “You see that?”

Has a very expressive way of emphasizing action in her speech. Clear, deep, dynamic voice. Perhaps worth recording.